

Department of Permitting Services (DPS)

Performance Plan

July 2008 – June 2009 with Performance Projections through 2009 and 2010
Carla A. Reid, Director

Contribution to Montgomery County Results: DPS contributes to the following results -

- A Responsive and Accountable Government
- An Effective and Efficient Transportation Network
- Safe Streets and Secure Neighborhoods
- Vital Living for All of Our Residents

What DPS Does and for Whom	How Much
<p><u>Overall</u></p> <p>The mission of the Department of Permitting Services is to provide the highest quality of public service while ensuring compliance with Montgomery County's development and construction standards.</p>	<p>Size of Budget in Total: \$29,761,850</p> <p>Number of Employees: 217 work years (WYs)</p>
<p><u>Construction Safety</u></p> <p>Promotes life safety in buildings and other structures.</p>	<p>DPS impacts anyone who enters any building structure in Montgomery County – except for those people in Rockville and Gaithersburg (have their own Permitting Agencies). DPS easily impacts a million people on a daily basis.</p>
<p><u>Environmental Code Compliance</u></p> <p>Implements environmental programs to ensure environment protected from potential degradation resulting from construction activities.</p>	<p>The environmental programs that DPS is responsible for administering are executed throughout the County. They include: sediment control, stormwater management and well and septic programs.</p>
<p><u>Plan Review</u></p> <p>Reviews plans and ensures compliance with existing codes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$10,119,000 • 75 WYs • 61,500 plans
<p><u>Permit and License Issuance</u></p> <p>Issues building permits and licenses to Applicants, Permit Runners, Homeowners, Builders, Architects, Business Owners, Vendors, Architects, Developers, Electricians, and Engineers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$5,952,400 • 45 WYs • 35,000 permits and 3,000 licenses
<p><u>Inspections and Investigations</u></p> <p>Conducts inspections of permitted work and investigates complaints.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$10,416,650 • 90 WYs • 118,000 inspections and 3,700 investigations
<p><u>Inquiries, Outreach, and Coordination</u></p> <p>Responds to inquiries from the public and engages the community in dialogue regarding the same. Coordinates work with internal and external agencies as well as non-</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$3,273,800 • 7 WYs • 2,500 information requests

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DPS Performance Plan (Draft of 08/28/07); Updated July 2008

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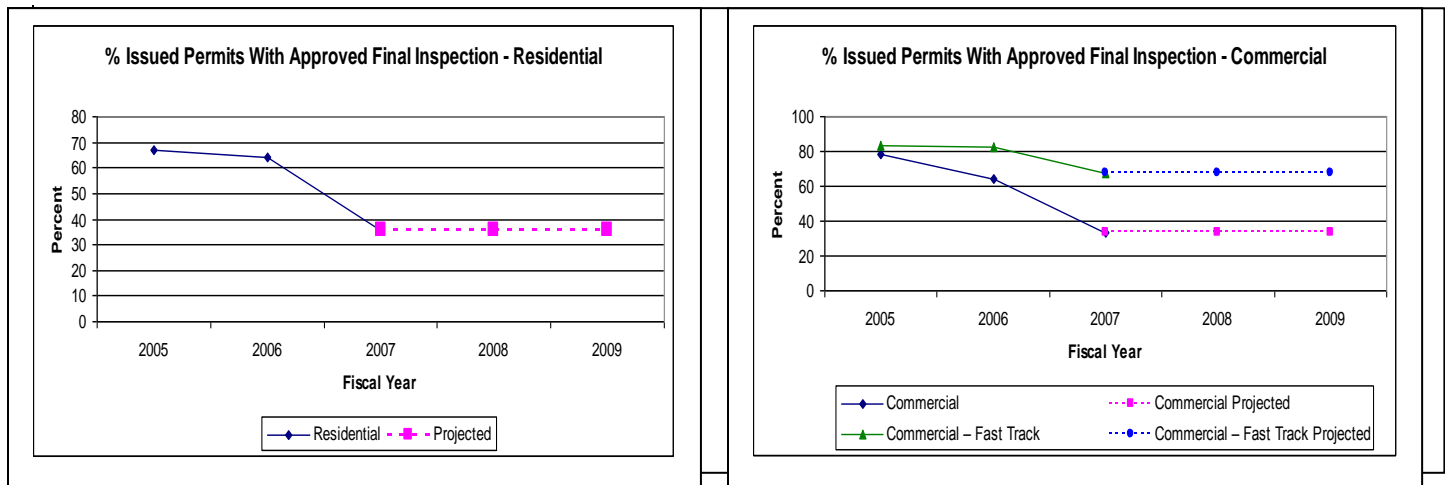
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profit and civic associations and elected officials.

Performance:

IMPACT (GOT IT RIGHT) MEASURES:

- % Permits with a Final Inspection



- **Construction Safety**

Seventeen (17) percent of the inspections DPS performs do not conform to applicable construction codes and standards and are therefore failed.

- **Qualitative Assessments from Independent, External Audits**

- Insurance Services Office (ISO) Report (every 3-5 years) / Building Code Effectiveness Grading Schedule (BCGES). ISO has a set of 28 criteria that they review and evaluate. Then, ISO assigns a classification from 1-10 (with 1 representing exemplary commitment to building code enforcement). DPS' current score in the category of one and two family dwellings is a 5; commercial structural is a 4.
- Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) Review (every two years). MDE's criteria to evaluate sediment control program effectiveness consists of: complete approved plans, adequate implementation of plans, adequate maintenance of devices, and successful enforcement of violations. During its most recent assessment, MDE inspected 64 randomly selected, active construction sites and found that on 100% of the sites appropriate enforcement measures had been taken by DPS inspectors.

Story Behind the Performance:

Contributing Factors:

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- **Final Inspections Provide Assurance and Protection of Community.** When it comes to land development permits (sediment control, right of way, etc), close-out/final procedures are clear and closely followed. Inspection staff is assigned to individual permits allowing ownership and follow up to get extensions when work is not completed in the timeframe allowed under the permit.
- **External Audits Have Produced Very Good Results.** In late 2007 when MDE inspected a sampling of active construction sites, MDE reported finding most of those sites in good condition and in compliance with erosion and sediment control requirements. Moreover, MDE noted that when sites had problems, DPS' use of enforcement was successful for correcting violations found. MDE considers DPS to be a "model" agency in the area of sediment control and other environmental matters. In its report, MDE even commended the DPS sediment control and stormwater inspection staff for their efforts.
- **Knowledgeable, Professional, Tenured Staff.** Many DPS employees have been in the department for 10 or more years. They serve on national, industry committees and participate in code creation.

Restricting Factors:

- **Lack of Final Inspections in Residential Building.** On the other hand, the lack of final building inspections increases odds that DPS' regulatory objectives will not be met. This lack of final inspections also does not provide customers the assurance that their properties are safe and have met regulatory requirements. Residential final inspections are currently voluntary. Customers call for them, if they want to. Two divisions in the same department treat final inspections inconsistently.
- **Internal, Technical Training Program Needs Improvement.** DPS needs to provide systematic business function training. About four years ago, field supervisors were collapsed into single manager positions. Since then, there is little time for managers to fill in the training gap. For example, with the collapsing of positions, managers are so burdened with administrative responsibilities that they rarely make field visits to determine training needs.

Action (What We Propose To Do To Improve Performance in the Next Three Years):

1. Pursue policy options and business practice modifications to ensure residential final inspections are completed and use and occupancy certificates are subsequently issued.
2. Develop a plan for garnering the County a 3 or better Building Code rating for both residential and commercial categories when the assessment period occurs in 2010.
3. Use the MDE criteria to independently measure DPS performance.
4. Coordinate with DEP to identify cross departmental measure(s) that reflect the county's efforts to protect the environment.
5. Implement a systematic technical training program.

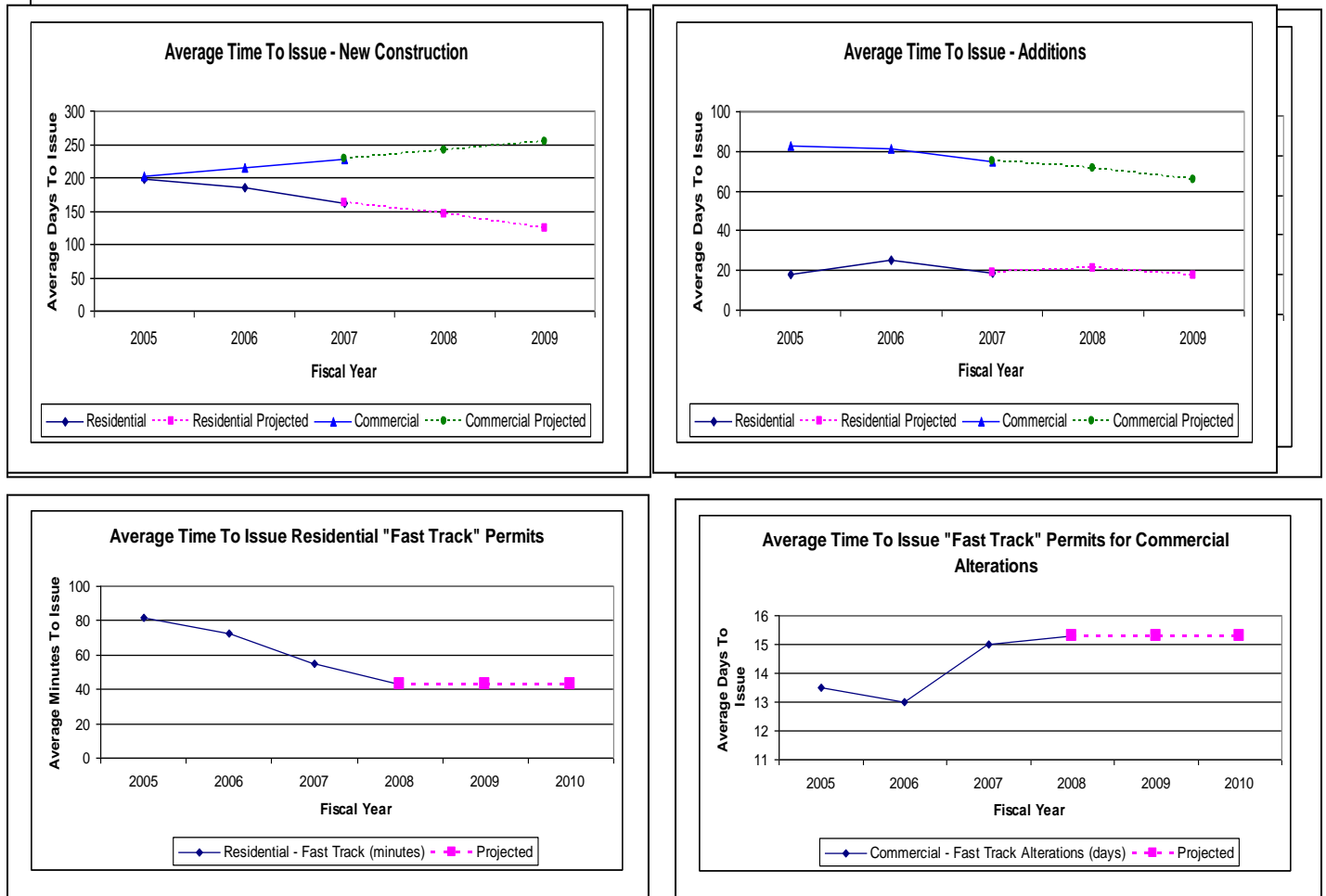
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TIMELINESS AND “EASE OF USE” MEASURES:

- Average Time to Issue Permits**



Contributing Factors:

- Unique Service - Permit Processing Facilitation.** The Casework Management concept is a great concept that has produced mixed results. When it works, and it does most of the time, it works well. Casework Management was intended to produce a generalist that would support the Land Development and Building Construction Divisions. However, this has not been fully accomplished because the review and inspection disciplines within the department are inconsistent in their use of departmental policies and the permit processing system. Therefore, multiple standard operating procedures have been developed, which have created complexities that Casework Management has difficulty keeping up with and supporting.

In addition, the current structure of Casework Management does not facilitate outreach and training of staff because there are no resources dedicated to these functions.

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- **Institution of Fast Track Counters.** The fast track counters in residential and commercial plan review has greatly contributed to the swift processing of customer requests. However, with the growing complexity of plans, this service can be upgraded with a few minor changes that will keep up with the trend toward customers submitting more complex plans.

Additionally, with the exception of well and septic reviews, the Land Development Division is almost completely out of the loop on providing fast track services. Some of the issues related to drainage and right of way infringement when residential permits are issued could possibly be more quickly revealed if land development reviews were a part of other fast track residential reviews.

Restricting Factors:

- **Permitting Information System Upgrades Must Keep Pace With Customer Demands.** To conduct most of types of business with DPS, customers must physically visit our one facility or send us mail. No permits can be applied for on-line because the current version of the Hansen Permitting Information System doesn't provide the ability to apply for a permit (or pay for the permit) on line.
- **Underutilization of Website Capabilities.** It is sometimes difficult for customers to use the web site. It is a challenge for customers to maneuver the web site and independently find information. DPS staff receives calls on a daily basis from customers wanting step-by-step guidance on locating needed information.
- **Inconsistent Plan Review Tracking Practices.** Preliminary investigations have revealed that plan review time data is inconsistently put into the system thereby creating unreliable information. We should begin to track the time frame for the plan reviews or permit issuance that are on the "department's clock" as a subset of total review times. This would mean tracking the time that the plans are actually in our office, which can also give us an indication of lag time between submissions for each review.

In addition, it is sometimes difficult to determine what staff member has custody of plans submitted. We could greatly improve customer satisfaction by knowing the plan location and status at all times.

Action (What We Propose To Do To Improve Performance in the Next Three Years):

1. Restructure the Casework Management Division to reduce the over-generalization of technical business practices.
2. Implement plan tracking process improvements on or before October 30, 2008 and update the website so that anyone can easily look up the status of any plan.
3. Implement the new version of the Hansen Permitting Information System.
4. Re-design the website.
5. Design public education programs targeted to the residential customer and the faith-based community audience.

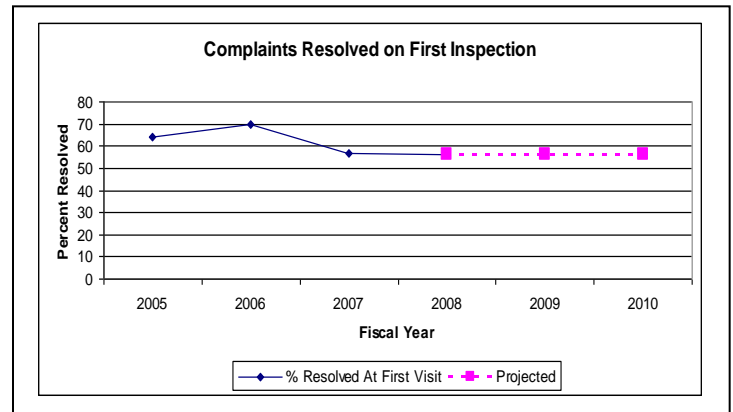
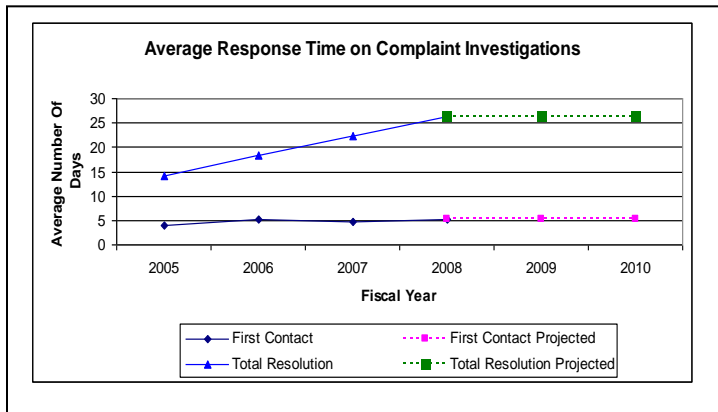
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PUBLIC CONFIDENCE MEASURES:

- Complaint Investigations**



- Customer Satisfaction Data from Current Surveys**

- The current survey instrument has construction deficiencies. As it is designed, it is difficult to correlate satisfaction to the various services provided.
- 10% of the customer service survey cards collected from 2004 to 2008 were sampled to give DPS a baseline indicator of customer satisfaction with counter services.
- Technical staff consultation received the highest score of 3.93 out of 4 points; the lowest was service at the fast track counter, 3.33 out of 4.
- When asked about areas needing improvement, 47% cited timeliness of service.

Story Behind the (last three years)

Contributing Factors:

- Point of Service Customer S**

lected at the point of service (inside the office only – after permit issuance and plan review) on a daily basis. The bad news is that it is neither consistently reviewed nor regularly acted upon. No DPS staff member is assigned to this task. There is also no provision for collecting survey data reflecting the experience that customers have in the field (inspections). DPS has not conducted a department wide, professionally managed customer survey in over five years.

**Survey Data
Under Construction
(to be developed)**

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Restricting Factors:

- **Customer Perception Improvements Are Needed.** There is also anecdotal evidence of a perception that the development community receives better service and programs than residential customers. We currently have no way of determining (1) how widely the perception is held and (2) if this perception is a reality. While DPS provides fast track services for both residential and commercial building customers, there are other special services that only commercial customers receive such as daily pre-design meetings. Without survey data, it is difficult to know what types of programs will better serve the residential customer population.
- **Need to Refine Complaint Data.** Complaint requests that are resolved on the first inspection need to be categorized to reflect the actual disposition of the complaint. These categories are: no violation found; case referred to another agency; violations found, but resolution was achieved. If additional investigations are required because resolution could not be achieved on the first visit, then a case file will be opened.

Action (What We Propose To Do To Improve Performance in the Next Three Years):

1. Develop a consistent method for collecting, reviewing, and acting upon customer feedback. Develop a survey tool that segregates the various customer audiences (i.e., residential vs. commercial). The first re-designed survey data will initially be analyzed in November 2008.
2. Dedicate resources in the restructured Casework Management Division to execute outreach activities, public education, and survey analysis.

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Appendix A: Budget

Appendix B: Implementation

- DPS' actions (what we propose to do to improve performance) are outlined in detail in our Accountability Plans/Reports. In addition, the Accountability Plans/Reports contain timelines and deliverables for all actions proposed in this document.

Appendix C: Data Development Agenda

- Survey Data
- Audit Data

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Addendum

1) Partnerships /Collaborations (in alphabetical order):

Council of Governments (COG) – DPS will continue to collaborate with COG to implement green building initiatives in Montgomery County.

Department of Finance, Department of Information Systems, and credit card companies - DPS will partner with entities to implement permit fee payments by credit card. Credit card payments is a service that customers continually request.

Department of Housing and Community Affairs, Department of Public Works and Transportation, Department of Fire and Rescue, and Department of Environmental Protection - DPS will partner with these departments to improve day to day operations as well as to look for opportunities to reduce inefficiencies where our business functions interface. We are working in conjunction with these departments to find solutions to some sensitive issues such as overcrowding and Clean Water Task Force initiatives.

Design For Life Committee – DPS partnered with this committee made up of “The Commission for People with Disabilities,” Maryland National Capital Building Industry Association, and the private sector to implement a voluntary program to increase accessibility and livability of single family homes.

Government Service Centers – DPS is researching the feasibility of decentralizing services to government service centers. DPS would like to leverage the community presence that the service centers enjoy by assisting them with educational forums and problem solving ventures.

Mansionization Task Force – DPS is providing expertise to this task force whose mission it is to address infill construction issues that could affect the character of the community.

Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission (MNCPPC) – DPS will partner with MNCPPC to enforce site plans approved by the Planning Board and to implement the upgraded permit processing information system. DPS is also working to improve processes that relate to site plan enforcement as well as the development of requirements (and subsequent implementation) of a new permitting information system that will allow us to gain more efficiencies and provide more on-line customer services.

Municipalities – DPS will collaborate with municipalities to improve customer service by providing permit information to them specific to their area.

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2) Innovations:

Focus on Developing Residential Customer Outreach Programs. Realizing that many residential customers use the services of DPS one time, DPS would like to ensure that the experience is a good one. We need to help customers understand how to easily use the services DPS offers by providing outreach services where the customers are – such as at home improvement stores and community meeting places. This could be considered a non-traditional place to reach out to customers. We would also like to increase our outreach to religious institutions.

Offer More Customer Service Options. Decentralize some of DPS' key services and offer on-line options for all services.

Implement Proactive Department Diagnostic Program. DPS has a need to proactively monitor its day to day business rather than waiting for infrequent external audits. DPS needs to obtain quality data on a regular basis that could possibly validate the external audits which are infrequently conducted.